



PRESS RELEASE
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For Immediate Release

July 27, 2006

**PINELLAS COUNTY MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO TAX EVASION THROUGH
EMBEZZLEMENT OF PAYROLL TAX FUNDS**

United States Attorney Paul I. Perez today announced that ROBERT CRAWFORD, age 63, of Pinellas County, pled guilty yesterday to one count of income tax evasion before United States Magistrate Judge Thomas B. McCoun, III. The charge carries a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment, up to a \$250,000 fine, and a maximum term of three years of supervised release.

The United States Attorney had filed a criminal information charging CRAWFORD with that offense on July 5, 2006. According to the facts in the plea agreement and testimony in court, CRAWFORD was an employee of Pay Plus Payroll Administrators, Inc. ("Pay Plus"). Pay Plus collected funds from its corporate clients and agreed to file payroll tax returns (Forms 941) with the Internal Revenue Service and pay to the IRS its clients' payroll taxes.

During the period between 1999 and 2003, CRAWFORD embezzled the funds of the company which he knew represented the payroll tax payments of Pay Plus' clients. He

engineered a scheme through which Pay Plus issued corporate checks to Crawford and other businesses and individuals associated with him, collected those funds, but did not turn them over to the IRS. During the tax year 2001, as a result of this scheme, he embezzled approximately \$456,707.80 in funds from Pay Plus. As a result, the defendant's actions represented an attempt to evade the collection and payment of said funds to the IRS. The total of payroll funds thus embezzled and diverted by the defendant between 1999 and 2003 was approximately \$1,582,756.

The case was investigated by the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation Division. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jay L. Hoffer of the Tampa Division.